

CONAN THE  
BARBARIAN

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# CONAN

THE BARBARIAN™



THE THING IN THE TEMPLE!

# CONAN THE BARBARIAN™

## THE THING IN THE TEMPLE!

GOLDEN TRUMPETS SOUND A FANFARE OF HARSH TRIUMPH... DRUMS THUNDER... CHANTS OF WORSHIP ECHO TO THE RINGING, WHITE-MISTY SKIES!

AALA IS QUEEN ONCE MORE IN THE TOWERED CITY CALLED BAL-SAGOOTH!!

AND AT HER SIDE MARCH TWO GIANTS AMONG MEN... CONAN THE CIMMERIAN, AND GREAT, RED-BEARED FAFNIR OUT OF VANAHEIM...!

STAN LEE PROUDLY PRESENTS:

ROY THOMAS and GIL KANE  
WRITER/EDITOR ARTIST

DAN ADKINS EMBELLISHER  
ARTIE SIMEK LETTERER

ADAPTED  
FROM THE STORY  
"THE GODS OF  
BAL-SAGOOTH"

ROBERT E.  
HOWARD,  
CREATOR OF  
CONAN

10¢ 32

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AND NOW, NIGHT FALLS ON BAL-SAGOOTH, EVEN AS THE PROUD, FIERCE-EYED EMPRESS ENTERS HER INNER PALACE...

...THAT PALACE RE-CONQUERED FOR HER BY TWO MIGHTY-THEWED WARRIORS.

WELCOME HOME, O GODDESS!

THESE GREAT HALLS HAVE BEEN COLD AND LONELY WITHOUT--

NOW YOU GIVE ME WELCOME-- YOU WHO ALL SPAT ON ME WHEN THE HIGH PRIEST GOTHAN EXILED ME!

GO! I'LL LOOK ON YOUR SPITEFUL MASKS TOMORROW --BUT NOT TONIGHT!

LET ME AT THEM, GIRL! MY AXE IS STILL THIRSTY--

--FOR THE BLOOD IT'S NOT TASTED TODAY!

YOUR STEEL WILL DRINK DEEP YET, FAFNIR.

HAD YOU GAMBLED WITH CROWNS AS I HAVE, YOU'D KNOW IT'S SIMPLER TO SEIZE A SCEPTRE THAN TO KEEP IT.

TRUE, CONAN AND I SLEW THE LIVING METAL-THING WHICH GOTHAN CONJURED AGAINST US--

BUT, HE AND HIS PUPPET-KING SKA LURK IN THE SECRET CORRIDORS WHICH HONEY-COMB THIS CITY...

AND, WHILE THAT WIZARD STILL WEARS THE JADE AMULET OF KINGSHIP--MY THRONE TOTTERS BENEATH ME!

YOUR SUBJECTS ARE FICKLE--AND FOOLS, DESPITE HAVING BUILT SUCH A GREAT FORTRESS CITY.

WHO ARE THESE PEOPLE, KYRIE?

YOUR FELLOW VANIR MEANT NOTHING. GO ON...

AGES AGONE, BAL-SAGOOTH WAS A GREAT EMPIRE, RULING ALL THE ISLES OF THIS INLAND SEA--BUT NOW, ONLY THIS ISLAND AND DIM MEMORIES ARE LEFT TO THEM.

KYRIE IS DEAD! SHE IS THE GIRL WHOM THE STORM CAST ASHORE HERE YEARS AGO.

I AM AALA NOW...HUMAN INCARNATION OF THEIR RED-TRESSED SEA-GODDESS... AND DO NOT FORGET IT!

AND, LEGEND SAYS THIS CITY ALSO WILL FALL--

"...WHEN TWO MEN CAME OUT OF THE VILAYET SEA, THRU THE WHITE MIST WHICH FOREVER HIDES IT FROM SIGHT!"



"AS YOU TWO CAME, CONAN--  
YOU AND FAFNIR,  
ONLY ONE SHORT NIGHT AGO!"



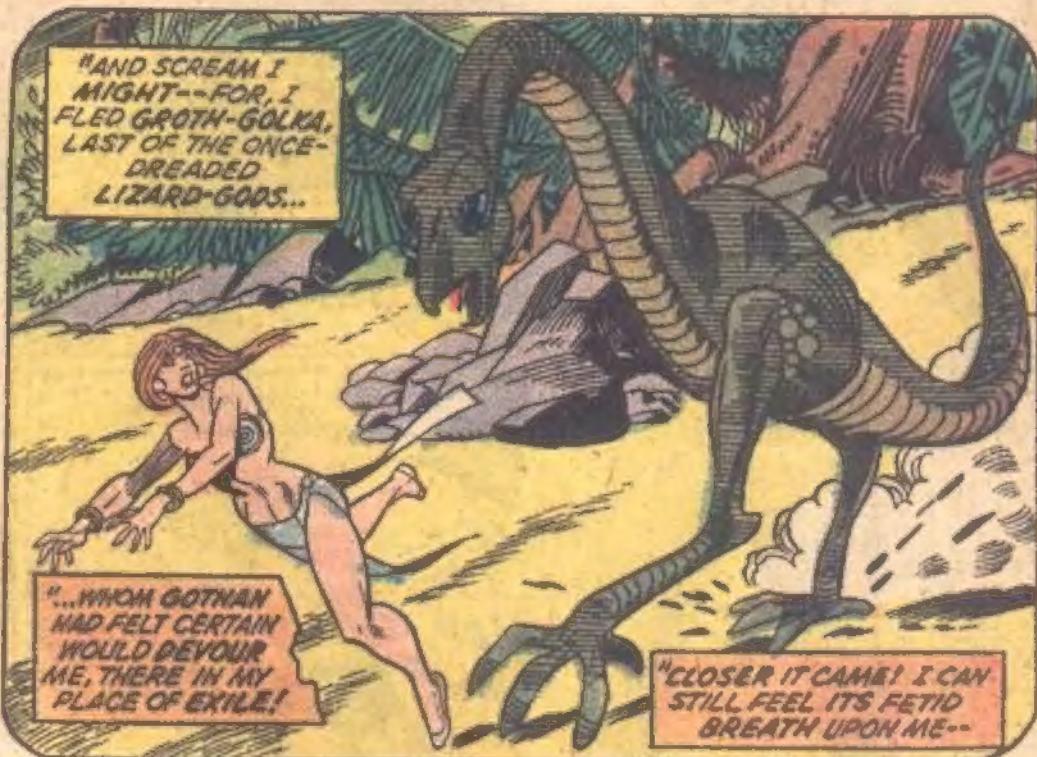
"GOOD THING EVEN THESE SIMPLE PEOPLE DID NOT SEE THEIR PAIR OF NEW GODS FIGHTING EACH OTHER..."

"...AS IF YOUR LONE WEAPONS COULD SETTLE THE AGE-OLD DEATH-FEUD 'TWIXT CHIMMERIAN AND YANIRMAN!"

"PERHAPS IT IS JUST AS WELL THAT--AT THAT VERY MOMENT--



"--YOU HEARD ME SCREAM--!"



"AND SCREAM I MIGHT--FOR, I FLED GROTH-GOLKA, LAST OF THE ONCE-DREADED LIZARD-GODS..."

"...WHOM GOTHAN HAD FELT CERTAIN WOULD DEVOUR ME, THERE IN MY PLACE OF EXILE!"

"CLOSER IT CAME! I CAN STILL FEEL ITS FETID BREATH UPON ME--"

"THEN, TWIN GIANTS STRUCK-- FIRST YOU, CONAN--THEN YOU, BEARDED FAFNIR--"



"--TILL THE LIZARD-GOD FELL, ITS NECK CRACKED BY ONE MAN-- THEN BROKEN BY THE SECOND!"

STRANGE THE WAY YOU TWO HAPPENED OUT OF THE SEA-- IN MY VERY HOUR OF NEED.

ALMOST AS IF--THE MYTHS OF THIS FORGOTTEN ISLE--HAD SOME BASIS OF TRUTH....!"

THEY ARE STORIES..."

THAT'S ALL.

"PERHAPS! I HOPE YOU ARE RIGHT, BARBARIAN... FOR ELSE, BAL-SAGOOTH IS SURELY DOOMED..."

"--AND THE VICTORY WE WON THIS DAY WILL SOON TURN TO BITTER ASHES IN OUR MOUTHS!"

"AYE, AND WHAT A VICTORY IT WAS, EH, MY CHAMPIONS? FIRST, OUR BRAZEN APPROACH--THREE, AGAINST A CITY--"

"BUT GOTHAN SUMMONED VERTORIX--A WARRIOR OF LIVING METAL--"



"--AND ANIMATED BY THE PRIEST'S OWN EYES--"

"THEN, MY INVOKING OF AN ANCIENT CHALLENGE..."

"...SO THAT CONAN WOULD HAVE FOUGHT THE PUPPET SKA FOR THE THRONE!"

"SKA WOULD HAVE DIED IN THAT HOUR-- AND GOTHAN SOON AFTER--"

"--YET WHO PROVED, WHEN I DEFLECTED THE SUN INTO THOSE EYES--"



"A PITY THAT THE PEOPLE THEN JOYFULLY PRESSED IN UPON US--OR ELSE GOTHAN AND SKA WOULD SOON HAVE BEEN HANGING FROM THE CITY'S RAM-PARTS!"

"STILL, I WAS QUEEN AGAIN... GODDESS ONCE MORE..."

"AND THAT WAS ALL THAT MATTERED..."

"...OR SEEMED TO, IN THE MADNESS OF THE MOMENT!"

MAYBE GOTHAN IS LESS A THREAT THAN YOU IMAGINE...

NO! I LEARNED THINGS, CONAN, WHEN GOTHAN AND I WERE... CLOSER.

DEEP IN GRISLY CAVERNS, HE'S MADE BEASTS OF MEN... AND MEN OF BEASTS!

AND ONCE, DRUNK, HE HINTED OF ONE GIBBERING, NAMELESS THING WHICH--

BUT, I GROW TIRED...AND MY BED-CHAMBER IS NEXT TO THIS ONE.

IT HAS NO OPENINGS, SAVE ONLY THIS SINGLE DOOR.

YOU SHALL KEEP THIS ROOM...

I'LL SLEEP FAR EASIER WITH YOU BETWEEN ME AND THE REST OF THE CITY, CONAN.

AND OF COURSE... YOU TOO, FAFNIR.

AND ONE OF US WILL WATCH, WHILE THE OTHER SLEEPS.

MEN'S FORTUNES ARE AS UNSTABLE AS THE RAGING SEA THAT WASHED US ASHORE, CIMMERIAN.

LAST NIGHT, I WAS CAPTAIN OF A PIRATE BAND... AND YOU WERE MY CAPTIVE.

NOW, WE'RE SWORD BROTHERS--RIGHT-HAND MEN TO A USURPER QUEEN--

AND YOU, I THINK, SHALL SOON BE EVEN MORE THAN THAT!

HOW SO, VANIRMAN?

DON'T BE COY, THOT MAN. BY YMIR, THERE'S MORE... THAN FRIENDSHIP... IN THAT GIRL'S LONGING GLANCES AT YOU.

I'D... GO ON... BUT THAT FIRE MAKES ME... SLEEPY...

YES... THE FIRE...

WHAT? ASLEEP ALREADY? WELL... IT'S BEEN A FULL DAY...

SLUMBER AWAY, FRIEND... AND IF YOU SMOKE LOUD ENOUGH... TO KEEP ME AWAKE, TOO...

...THEN... I'LL... KEEP... WATCH...

YET, EVEN AS HE SPEAKS, THE BLACK-MANED BARBARIAN IS AWARE OF A STRANGE WEARINESS WHICH RESTS UPON HIS BROW. HE SLUMPS BACK IN HIS BROAD CHAIR...

HIS EYE-LIDS GROW HEAVY...

...AS HE DIMLY PERCEIVES A VIOLENT SWAYING OF ONE OF THE HEAVY CURTAINS NEARBY...

**A**ND, AS HE SPRAWLS THERE, STRIVING VAGUELY TO PIERCE THE VEIL WHICH CLOAKS HIS MIND...



**A** NIGHTMARE VISION SLINKS FROM BEHIND THE HANGINGS!



**T**HEN, AS THE FOUL APPARITION HALTS DIRECTLY BEFORE HIM...



**A**...AS GHARLED TALONS REACH FOR HIS TENSING THROAT...



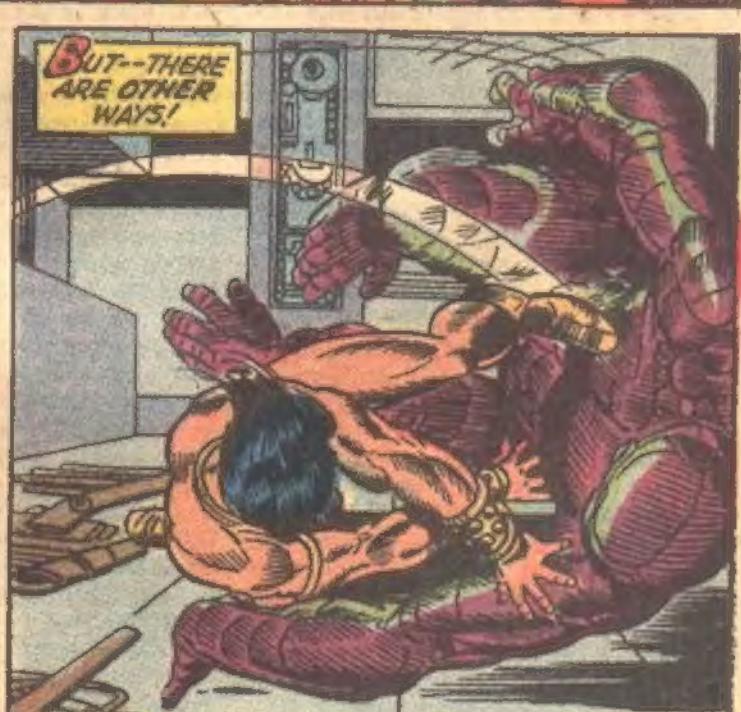
...THE CIMMERIAN IS SUDDENLY, FEARFULLY AWARE THAT THIS NIGHTMARE IS--



**T**HE FIRE HAS NUMBED CONAN'S REFLEXES...



...SO THAT, THOUGH GRASPING FINGERS MISS HIS NECK...



**F**AFNIR! WAKE UP, YOU LOG-SAWING OAF!

DO YOU THINK I WANT TO FIGHT THIS DEVIL ALL ALONE?

**B**UT, THERE IS NO SOUND IN THE ROOM, SAVE CONAN'S OWN VOICE...

...AND THE SHARP LICKING OF THE FLAMES.



# SUPER-SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT!

## STAN LEE'S SOAPBOX

Okay, troops, it's time to level with Mermaid Assembled! Each day a kaboodle of mail pours into the Bullpen asking why my script-writing output has dwindled to practically zero. I'd like to give you a simple answer, but I'm the kinda guy who can't say "hello" without making it a speech. So try to bear with me, huh? I think I can promise you a surprise or two as we go rambling along. Anyway, if ye harken to these words, the seeds of truth and wisdom shall be scattered, mayhap, amongst thee!

Until now, mighty Marvel has been a lusty, gusty, irreverent mischief-maker in the wondrous world of comix. It was Marvel that first introduced heroes with human hang-ups; Marvel that popularized guest-star appearances till you needed a scorecard to tell you who was who; Marvel that dared create continued stories -- and then forgot how to end them, so that they went on forever! It was Marvel who gave you a Bullpen Bulletins page where we can rap together like this: Marvel who liberated the geniuses who bring you these epics from their shadow of anonymity, and billboarded the name of every writer, artist, and letterer until you now know 'em almost as well as we do. Only Marvel could have made satire and sentimentality, relevance and ribaldry a part of the comix mystique. And who but Marvel would have dared make a hero out of the Hulk, or a bald-headed, self-pitying sky-rider called the Silver Surfer? Well, we could go on forever, but it might sound like bragging -- and you know how we hate to do that!

Anyway, that takes us up to the present. Like a fella named Milhouse recently said, Phase One has just about had it -- and it's time for Phase Two to begin. No man, no group of men, no publishing company can rest on its laurels -- and Marvel's still much too young, too zingy, too bright-eyed and bushy-tailed to settle back and bask in the sun of yesterday's success. So here's the real scoop -- here's where we're at, and where we're headed -- and be sure to pay attention, 'cause we're not making a move without ya!

First, I've been bustin' to tell you that Rascally Roy Thomas, whose sensational scripts and awesome editorial assistance have helped spearhead Marvel's gallop to greatness, has been promoted to Editor! That means the titanic Mr. T. will be the omnipotent overseer of all our plots and stories. And you can bet he'll be ably assisted by the greatest group of with-it writers ever assembled under any comix roof -- script-writing stalwarts such as Gerry Conway, Archie Goodwin, Steve Englehart, Mike Friedrich, Gary Friedrich, George Alec Effinger, Gardner Fox, and Stu Schwartzberg, not to

mention Wild Bill Everett and Larrupin' Larry Lieber!

Next, Fearless Frank Giacoia has been appointed our Assistant Art Director! Frankie's credentials for this position are impeccable. He's not only one of the finest inkers our field has ever produced, but -- and not many of you may know this -- he's also a powerful penciller in his own right! Frank's been a top newspaper strip artist as well as a comic-book caliph for years -- and now he's all ours!

But, if this sounds to you like ol' Stan is singing his own swan song, forget it! Yours Truly feels like a tiger unleashed! With Roy supervising our swingin' storylines, and Frankie lending a hand with the art direction (not to mention Jumbo John Verpoorten supporting the whole megillah by handling the almost superhuman job of coordinating our ever-increasing production schedules), it means that I'll finally have the time (after all these years of writing and kibitzing) to devote myself exclusively to dreaming up new, exciting projects for the Bullpen, new directions for us to take, new types of mags to produce -- both comix and other kinds, and new fields for Marvel to conquer in film, TV, books, and you-name-it-we'll-do-it!

Wouldja believe we've already started work on a whole series of new comix titles? We'll clue you in, of course, in future Bullpen columns. Yep, we've got surprises in store for fanatical fans and casual readers alike. We're setting up brand new departments to bring you fantastic types of entertainment no comix company has ever thought of creating before. And, whenever I can take a break, I'll be devoting more time than ever to lecturing at colleges and universities, doing my bit to spread the gospel according to Marvel! However, even though I no longer have time to write any steady features, I've a hunch that this battered old typewriter which I'm pounding on right now will always prove to be a lure that I can't resist, so take warning -- you never know when the phantom script-writer will strike again! Anyway, we've been friends for so long, and shared so many great times together here on the pages of Marvel, that I'm just not about to let you get away! So you'll still find me yekkin' at you right here in the ol' Soapbox each month -- and if you ever stand me up, it's one demerit!

And that's it for now, gang. If you think we turned you on before, the best is yet to be -- wait'll you see what's coming! Hang loose! Face front! Marvel's on the move again! We're pushing Phase Two -- and it's all for you!

Excelsior!

## THE MIGHTY MARVEL CHECKLIST

New On Sale

**FANTASTIC FOUR #126:** This is where it all began! Still "The World's Greatest Comix Mag!" And now -- the return of the Mole Man!

**SPIDER-MAN #112:** Spidey cops out! Our wall-crawler turns his back on the world -- and wait'll you find out why!

**THOR #203:** Ego-Prime defeated! Odin's master plan revealed at last! Then -- the birth of a new mystery!

**AVENGERS #103:** The Sentinels strike! How can the Avengers stop them -- while the Scarlet Witch is held hostage?

**HULK #155:** The awesome entity called -- the Shaper of Worlds! And, wouldja believe -- Captain Axis!

**CAPT. AMERICA & THE FALCON #153:** Cap vs. Nick Fury! Sharon quits Shield! While the Falcon -- well, wait and see!

**DAREDEVIL #91:** He's back from the dead! Mr. Fear -- the only man who knows DD's true identity! So -- look out!

**SUB-MARINER #53:** The battle to the finish with Sunfire! And, you've never seen anything quite like Dragon-Lord!

**IRON MAN #50:** Can Princess Python give Shellhead a fight for his life? Well, if she can't -- the Cyborg Sinister can!

**CONAN THE BARBARIAN #18:** Demons that walk like men! A world in chaos! See why we call this one -- "The Kingdom of the Dead!"

**KULL THE CONQUEROR #4:** Fantasy master John Jakes plotted this one! "The Night of the Red Slavers!" A must!

**MARVEL TEAM-UP #4:** Spidey's life in danger! Morbius at large! And then -- enter the X-Men! Like great!

**CAPTAIN MARVEL #22:** The hero who just wouldn't die! But, that was before he met -- Megaton, the Nuclear Murderer!

**AMAZING ADVENTURES #14:** Give it up, Beast! Even you can't survive the deadly attack of Quasimodo -- the computer that kills!

**WEREWOLF BY NIGHT #1:** Marvel's newest, weirdest sensation yet! Man into wolf -- at midnight! Far out!

**TOMB OF DRACULA #4:** Dracula at bay! A mysterious mirror -- which may mean safety, or doom! Eerie beyond belief!

**MARVEL FEATURE #5:** Trapped in a world too big for him! Ant-Man comes face to face with -- Egghead!

**MARVEL PREMIERE #4:** Serpent-men and shadows! Dr. Strange vs. -- the Spawn of Slugguth!

**CREATURES ON THE LOOSE #19:** Gulliver Jones vs. the Barbarians of Mars! Fantasy -- with a mighty Marvel twist!

**SGT. FURY #102:** Talk about way-out war-mags! The hard-hitting Howlers take on a crime syndicate -- in wartime Italy!

**RED WOLF #3:** "The War of the Wolf-Brothers!" Our Indian avenger goes into action at the head of a raging wolfpack!

ONCE MORE THE HULKING BLACK DEMON CHARGES--  
AND ONCE MORE, THE PANTHERISH BARBARIAN EVADES  
HIM, THOUGH NOT BY MUCH!



YET, PERHAPS...  
IT IS  
ENOUGH.

GIVE ME A GOOD SWORD,  
AND I'LL FIGHT ANY-  
THING IT CAN CUT!

NOW COME  
AHEAD, FIEND!  
FROM THE  
HANGINGS  
YOU CAME--



--AND  
TO THEM  
YOU'LL  
RETURN!

HAH! YOU'RE GOOD IN THE DARK--

BUT NOT  
THIS KIND  
OF DARK,  
HEY?



WELL?  
WHY  
DON'T YOU  
SAY  
SOMETHING?

GROWL,  
AT LEAST?



SPEAK,  
YOU DEVIL!  
SPEAK!

ARE YOU MAN--OR  
MUTE MONSTER--  
OR WHAT?

BUT STILL  
THE  
CHAMBER  
IS SILENT...  
SAVE FOR  
CONAN'S  
ECHOED  
TAINTS...

...THE HACK-HACK-HACKING OF AN ANGRY BLADE...



...AND THE RAGING, RELENTLESS CRACKLE OF THE LONG-HUNGERING FIRE!

CONAN--WHAT STENCH IS THAT, LIKE SOME DEVIL ROASTED ON HIS OWN SPIT?

YOU ARE MORE RIGHT THAN YOU KNOW, FAFNIR.

SO, YOU WAKE-- NOW THE SLAUGHTER'S DONE!?

I SWEAR BY BRAGI, MAN--I DON'T KNOW WHAT CAME OVER ME.

IT WAS LIKE I WAS-- BEWITCHED!

BEWITCHED? PERHAPS. BUT NOW, LET'S--

WHO IN THE NAME OF--?

HOLD!

I'M TIRED OF ALL THIS LURKING AND CREEPING AND HIDING BEHIND CURTAINS!

THIS TIME, BY CROM, I'LL STRIKE FIRST--

--AND LET A CORPSE GIVE ME THE ANSWERS I SEEK!

HUNH! ONE OF GOTHA'S PRIESTLY LACKEYS, I'D BET.

HE CAST A SPELL OF SLEEP UPON US BOTH...

...BUT NETTED ONLY ONE, EH?

TOO BAD IT WASN'T THAT SORCERER HIMSELF! NOW THERE'S A RAT I'D LOVE TO SMOKE FROM HIS--

WHAT'S THAT??

A SCREAM-- FROM AALA'S ROOM! FAFNIR-- TAKE YOUR AXE TO THAT LOCKED DOOR!

NO, NOT MY AXE, LITTLE MAN...

FAFNIR'S BODY IS ALL HE NEEDS...

...TO SHATTER THE ROTTED WOOD OF BAL-SAGOOTH!

IT MAY, OR IT MAY NOT BE THE SPITEFUL VISAGE OF GOTHAN WHICH FLICKERS OBSCENELY AMONG THE SHADOWS IN THE QUEEN'S CHAMBER...

BUT, THERE IS ALSO... SOMETHING ELSE!

A GREAT DARK SHAPE FROM SOME MADMAN'S DREAM-- WHICH TURNS COLD-FLAMING EYES UPON THE PUNY CREATURES THAT HAVE SURPRISED IT!

FOR A FLEETING MOMENT, CONAN WONDERS--

WHAT FOUL KNOWLEDGE HAS BIRTHED THIS LOATHSOME DEVIL-SPAWN-- WHAT HIDEOUS BLENDING OF HUMAN AND BESTIAL THINGS, WITH NAMELESS SHAPES FROM-- OUTSIDE?

THEN, THE TERRIFIED GODDESS SCREAMS--

...AND THE THING REACTS--VIOLENTLY!

KRRR

FAFNIR!

STAY BACK, CIMMERIAN! YOU GOT YOUR CHANCE AT VERTORIX...

...AND AT THE DEVIL WHICH LURKED IN THE HANGINGS!

BUT THIS MONSTER, BY BRAGI--

THIS ONE IS FAFNIR'S!

HAH!

SO YOU LIKE A GOOD SCRAP, DO YOU, FIEND?

WELL THEN, THOUGH I DON'T KNOW WHAT KIND OF GIBBERISH YOU'RE SPOUTING AT ME--

...I'LL BE GLAD TO OBLIGE!

LIKE A LIVING TOWER OF EVIL,  
THE GREAT BLACK SHAPE LOOMS  
ABOVE THE VANIRMAN, DWARFING  
AND OVERSHADOWING HIM...

...THEN LUNGES, LIKE SOME PIT-SPAWNED  
BEAST OF PREY!

FAFNIR IS FASTER STILL!

FAFNIR FIGHTS  
WELL! STILL, I  
MUST HELP  
HIM...

NO--NO!  
PLEASE--  
DON'T PUT  
ME DOWN,  
CONAN--  
PLEASE--!

I--I'M SO,  
AFRAID....

FALL,  
IN THE  
NAME  
OF YMIR--  
FALL!!!

BRAGI'S BLOOD!  
YOU'RE DRIPPING  
CRIMSON FROM A  
SCORE OF WOUNDS,  
DEVIL...

SO WHY DON'T  
YOU DIE, BLAST  
YOU?

OR--  
ARE YOU  
ALREADY  
DEAD??

URGLING MINDLESSLY, THE  
THING MAKES NO ANSWER...

...BUT TURNS  
AT THAT  
MOMENT TO  
FLEE...

FAFNIR!  
STOP  
MAN!

STOP!!

BUT, THE RED-BEARDED GIANT IS CLEAN BERSERK WITH THE RAGE OF BATTLE... THE MADNESS OF THE FRAY...

AND, WHEN THE BEAST-THING VANISHES HEAD-LONG INTO A DARK OPENING WHICH NOW GAPES IN THE WALL...

LOOSE ME, WOMAN!

I MUST GO WITH HIM!

WHY DO YOU NEED HIM--WHEN YOU HAVE ME?

WHAT? WHEN MY COMRADE MAY BE FIGHTING FOR HIS LIFE, EVEN NOW?

NO, BY CROM!

ALREADY YOU'VE COST ME MORE TIME THAN I CAN SPARE!

THAT WAY LEADS TO GOTHAH'S BLACK HELL!

FAFNIR WILL NEVER RETURN --AND I DON'T WANT YOU TO SHARE HIS FATE.

WAIT, UNTIL I CAN--

GO ON--PLAY AMONG YOUR BAUBLES AND SHINY TOYS...

I HAVE A MAN'S WORK TO DO!

YOU'LL REGRET THAT, YOU BRAINLESS BARBARIAN!

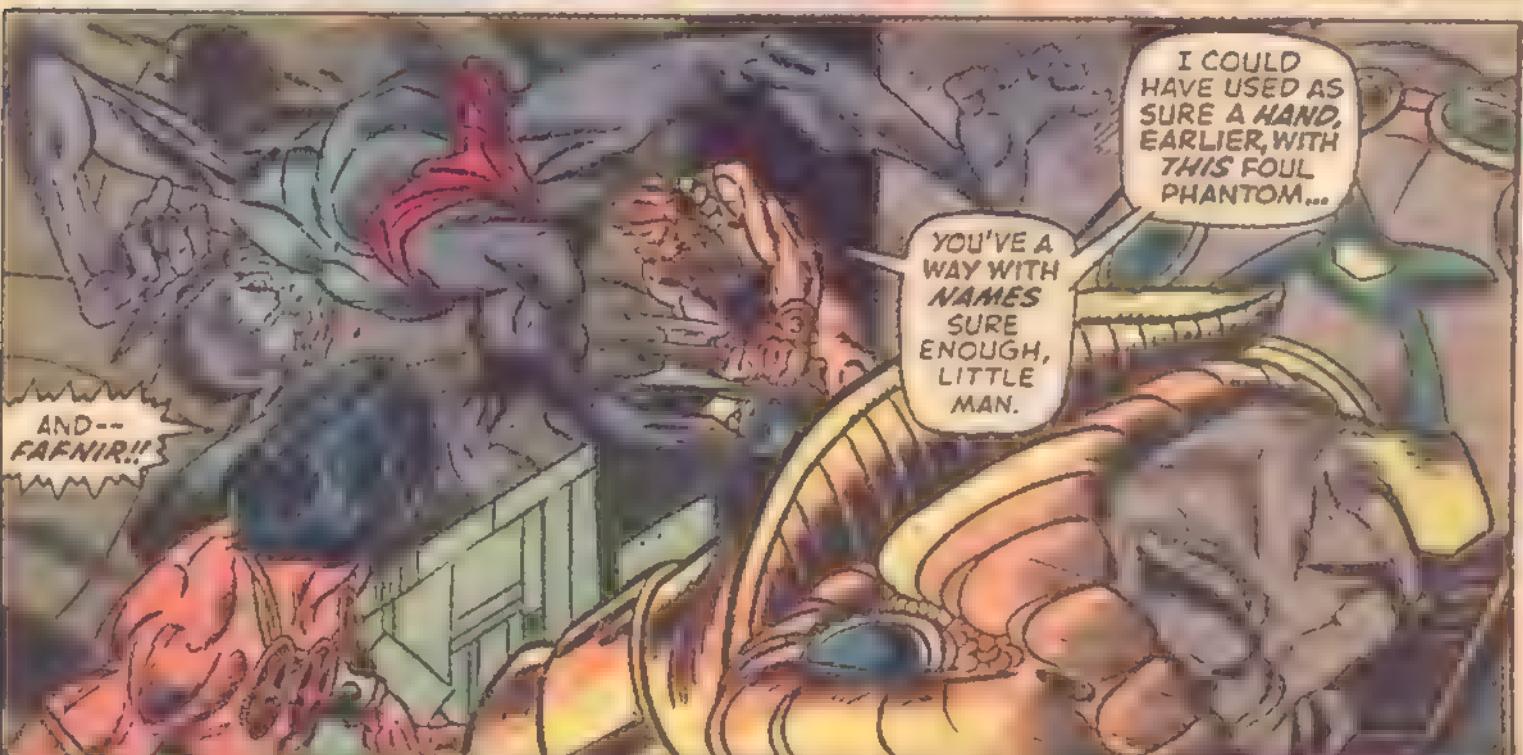
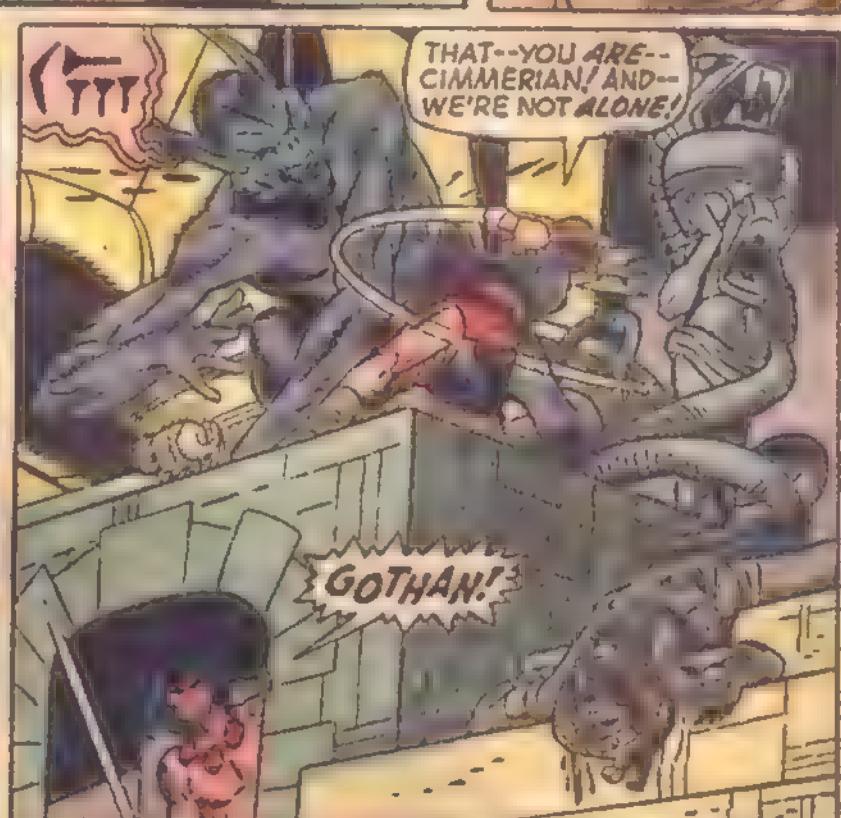
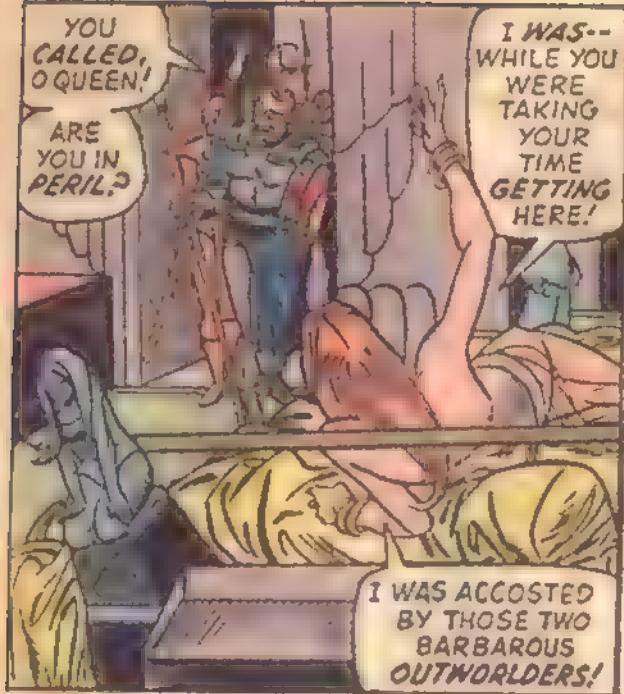
DO YOU HEAR ME?

BUT CONAN DOES NOT HEAR...

YOU'LL REGRET THAT DEARLY!

...SO SWIFT DOES HE RACE...

...THRU DEEPENING SHADOWS....!



...THOUGH  
IT WOULD  
APPEAR  
I'VE DONE  
WELL  
ENOUGH  
ALONE!

THAT  
IT  
DOES!

BUT--  
LOOK OUT,  
REDBEARD--

--LEST A  
SPLASHING  
OF MOLTEN  
LAVA DO WHAT  
PIT-SPAWNED  
MONSTER  
COULD NOT!

NOW  
WHAT--?

I--CHASED THE MONSTER  
HERE--WHERE IT SAW  
GOTHAN STANDING BY  
HIS HEATHEN ALTAR--  
AND SLEW HIM!

WHATEVER THE  
WIZARD'S TALENTS,  
INSPIRING LOYALTY  
DOESN'T SEEM TO BE  
AMONG THEM!

UH OH!  
NOW WHAT  
IN YMIR'S  
NAME--?

AALA AND HER  
GUARDSMEN--

AND SHE'S  
ANGRY,  
IF I KNOW  
WOMEN!

SEIZE  
THEM!  
KILL THEM  
BO--WAIT!

THERE LIES  
OLD GOTHAN--

--DEAD, IN A  
POOL OF HIS  
OWN BLACK  
BLOOD!

AT  
LAST!

AT LAST,  
I AM  
TRUE  
QUEEN  
OF BAL-  
SAGOTH!

THE  
SECRETS  
OF THE  
HIDDEN  
WAYS  
ARE  
MINE  
NOW--

--AND I'VE  
NO NEED OF  
BRAINLESS  
BARBARIANS!

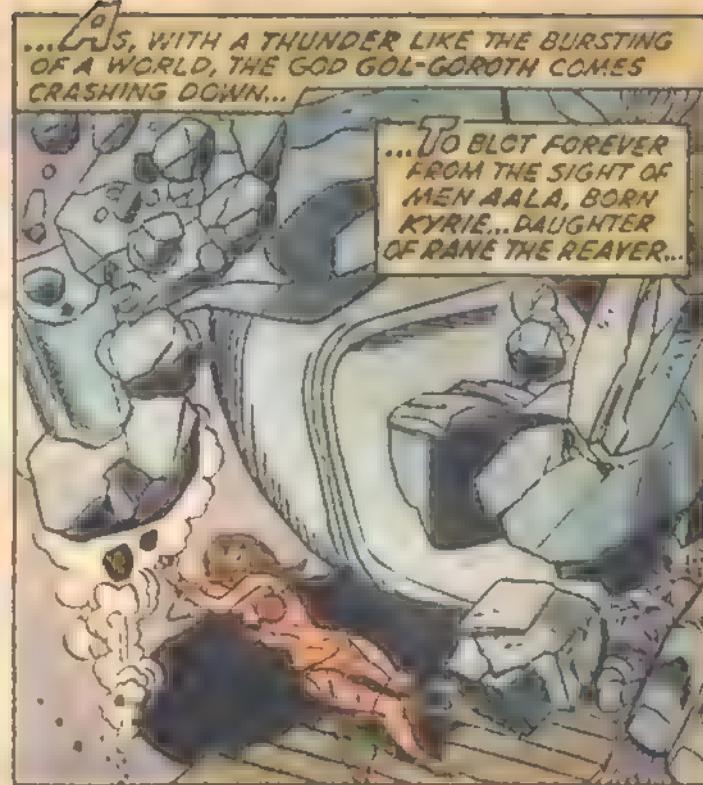
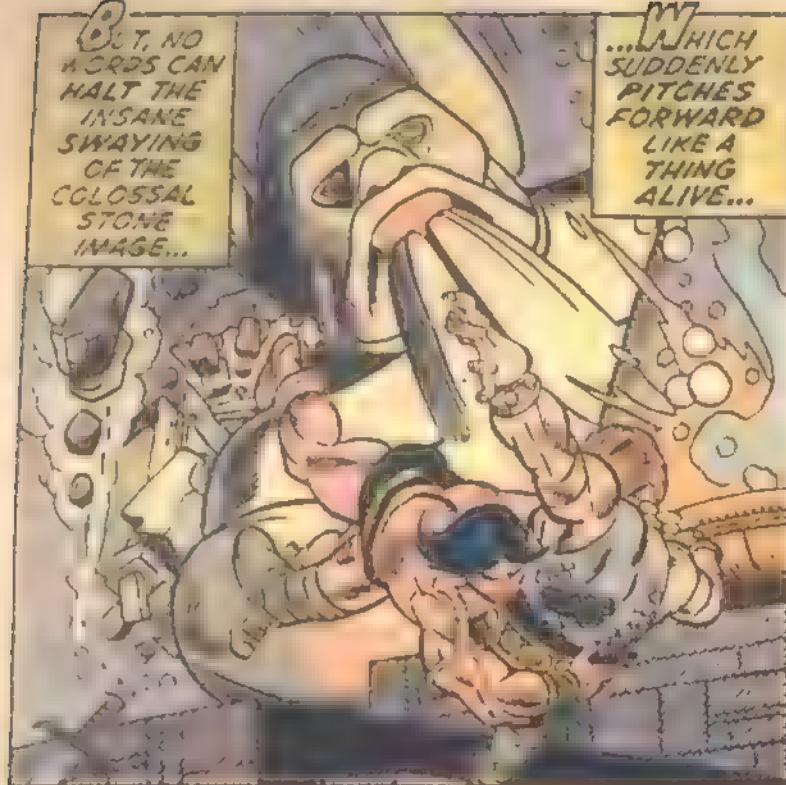
WELL, WHAT  
ARE YOU  
WAITING FOR,  
LACKEYS?  
RUN THEM  
THRU, BEFORE--

WHAT'S  
THAT???

THE TEMPLE--  
IT ROCKS AND  
TREMbles,  
LIKE A THING  
ALIVE!

THE  
PROPHECY  
OF DOOM!  
NO--  
NNNN--

IT  
CANNOT  
BE!!



Dear Stan, Roy, and Barry,

Conan #14 was, of course, as good as ever, but I detected a certain cue which I hope will not develop into a trend. The introduction of Melniboné, a world in another plane, pushes Conan into a cosmic picture, and the Barbarian becomes a "superhero." He is definitely not that, but rather a savage venturing in some dark corner of the earth. What makes Conan so superior to any other magazine is not only because it is artistic, lyrical, and elegant, but because it is earthy. I have never read a magazine with so much engrossment, zeal, and loss of identity, partly because your personae are far from being stereotypes. A few examples will suffice: Dunlang with the huge forehead (Conan #3), Murilo, a prince with carmine locks (#11), and Fatima the haggish queen (#12). These are people we witness for years in books and films and expect to see again, but never in so discriminating a light as in Conan. Your magnificent sidelights in each episode remind us that life is deviant and not straight and patterned. And yet Conan contains just that amount of sorcery and mysticism to charm us. It is fantastical but Conan is naked and human and fights with a blade, and we believe and live it. We do not question that somewhere in a time-forgotten era, there once existed a Tower of the Elephant, a Yezud, transformed monstrosities, and an intelligent gorilla race. You mesmerize us with your tales of what nature, infused with the mind of man gone mad, can bear... but when you give us Melniboné, another world intertwined with ours, we begin to doubt. The whole experience is slightly jarred — from savage with sword to epic saviour of the universe. What ensues will be variants from another galaxy, dimensional contacts, ultra-powerful machines, and Conan's mystic realm metamorphosed into a philosophy of superscience.

In my biased opinion, that is what I foresee if Conan is not contained to our earth. Conan is not Thor or Dr. Strange, which encompass the cosmos, spawns a system and expounds it. Conan has no system and everywhere the Cimmerian goes is shrouded in nature mystery. What we cannot explain and what enchants us we call sorcery. Conan is exactly that. Please don't change it.

Chung Wong, 55 Pike St., Apt 2A  
New York, N.Y. 10002

We don't intend to, friend. The Moorcock/Thomas/Smith collaboration was strictly a one-shot deal (though we'd hardly mind devoting a whole series to the mournful Melnibonean if enough readers demanded it). We're strictly in your corner on the matter of avoiding earth-shaking, world-saving quests for Conan; we just couldn't resist that single sensational team-up of the original sword-and-sorcery hero with the most original, most dramatic of his rightful successors. 'Nuff said, we hope?

Dear Roy and Barry:

"A Sword Called Stormbringer" was a disturbing story. It was crowded, verbose, and overwritten. The introduction of Melnibone was never successfully accomplished (one gets the idea that Roy expected everyone to be familiar with the Elric novels), and was confused by the scanty clues about the nature of Xiombarg. The pages were a malthusian nightmare of characters and names — the pointless re-introduction of Zephra and Zukala in such a drastically changed form (and Zukala never struck me as the type who would serve someone called the Lord of Laws); it would have been better to use two new characters — Khulan-Gath, Thoth-Amon, the Green Empress of Yagala, the Queen of Chaos Swords, Gaynor, Elric himself....

As for being over-written — "...red with the lifeblood of base slain maiden... if wildly waving scimitars bring

## KNOW YE THESE, THE HALLOWED RANKS OF MARVELDOM:

R.F.O. (Real Frantic One) — A buyer of at least 3 Marvel mags a month.  
T.T.B. (Titanic True Believer) — A divinely-inspired "No-Prize" winner.  
Q.N.S. (Quite 'Nuff Sayer) — A fortunate frantic one who's had a letter printed.

down their auburn haired prey...!" REH would never have so pretentiously striven for images, would never have used a pseudo poetic style to such little advantage. And there were endless introductions, wordy explanations that never seemed to explain a whole lot.

Well, there were good points. The characterization of Conan was superb throughout — his suspicion of Zukala, his rash attack on Elric, his fear of and dislike of sorcery. The line about valuing Crom because he doesn't bother with the lives of men was Howard incarnate. And after all the scenes had been set, all the myriad characters introduced, Roy and Barry gave us the most magnificent battle scene ever, Conan and Elric against the Chaos Pack.

I look forward to the second half of this epic with high hopes that you will overcome the obstacles that plagued this issue. The potential is obviously there, as you have already proven.

Juan Cole, Northwestern Univ.,  
1960 Sheridan Rd., Evanston, Ill. 60201

And we look forward with temerity and trepidation to your comments on issue #15, Juan. Meanwhile, Roy and Barry would like to go on record here and now as freely admitted that it was they, and they alone, who — for better or for worse — drafted Zukala and Zephra into their co-starring roles in CONAN #14-15. The many-talented Mr. Moorcock's original plot did indeed introduce a new wizard and daughter, as you would have wished; but Roy and Barry thought (and continue to think) that the return of two characters from issue #5 might tie the story in to the Conan saga rather better. So far, you're the only one who's complained — so maybe we'd better quit while we're ahead and go on to our next letter....

Dear Roy

CONAN has come a long way since you sent me stats of the first issue, and I'm happy to say that the improvement has borne out my early enthusiasm. Barry Smith has definitely matured as an artist on this strip, and your own scripting is some of the best I've seen in comics. Clearly a work of love like this brings out the best in both of you.

By the way, inasmuch as you've mentioned associated books, etc., in your letters column, I wonder if you could tell your readers about FANTASTIC STORIES. As you know, ours is the only sf/fantasy magazine which presently publishes sword & sorcery fiction — along, of course, with a wide variety of other kinds of fantasy. In our February issue we published Mike Moorcock's "The Sleeping Sorceress," his first new Elric novella in years — and a fitting companion to "A Sword Called Stormbringer" in the March CONAN.

More important, we've got a new Conan novella coming up in our August issue — which, by some coincidence, is also our 20th Anniversary Issue. The story is "The Witch of the Mists," and it's written by L. Sprague deCamp and Lin Carter, who, as you know, have been editing and filling in the blank spots in the Conan saga for Lancer Books. (Sprague also does a semi-regular feature for us, 'Literary Swordsmen and Sorcerers,' in which he writes about the great fantasy writers of the past.) Spread the word, okay?

Ted White, Editor: AMAZING, FANTASTIC  
P.O. Box 409, Falls Church, Va. 22046

Anytime, Ted. It's always a pleasure to hear from a knowledgeable sf and comix fan like yourself — especially since it was a nostalgia piece on early comix (later collected into the volume *All in Color for a Dime*) which helped introduce our own spanking new editor Roy Thomas to the wondrous world of fandom, lo, these too-many years ago. Meanwhile, we know you plan a review of the CONAN issues to date in a near-future issue of FANTASTIC, to boot — and we hope the mag fares as well there as it did on the Hyborian Page! Keep those swashes buckling, friend!

K.O.F. (Keeper Of the Flame) — One who recruits a newcomer to Marvel's rotlickin' ranks.

P.M.M. (Permanent Marvelous Maxxus) — Anyone possessing all four of the other titles.

F.F.F. (Fearless Front Facer) — An honorary title bestowed for devotion to Marvel above and beyond the call of duty.

AYE...SKA! HE  
WHO WEARS THE  
CROWN OF  
BAL-SAGOOTH!

OLD GOTHAH KEPT FOR HIMSELF  
THE JADE AMULET OF KINGSHIP...

BUT, IF  
YOU TWO  
STILL  
LIVE,  
THEN HE  
MUST BE--  
DEAD!

THAT MAKES ME  
UNDISPUTED KING--  
AND A WISE KING  
HAS ENEMIES ONLY  
BENEATH THE  
GROUND, SO--

STOP TALKING, MAN, AND--

LOOK  
OUT!

EH? WHAT  
KIND OF  
LIE--?

GOL-GOROTH  
PRESERVE  
ME!!

HAH! SKA'S  
LACKEYS  
SCATTER LIKE  
CHAFF IN A  
STORM!

BUT  
NOT  
SKA!

AMBITION,  
AS MUCH AS  
FEAR,  
ROOTS HIM  
WHERE HE  
STANDS.

SKA--WE'VE  
NO QUARREL  
WITH YOU.

SHOW US  
THE WAY  
OFF THIS  
ACCURSED  
ISLAND, AND--

NEVER!

I AM  
KING!  
KING IN BAL-  
SAGOOTH!

I'M NO SUPERSTITIOUS  
LOUT LIKE THE OTHERS,  
WHO THINK YOU GODS  
OR PORTENTS OF DOOM.

YOUR WORLD IS TUM-  
BLING DOWN AROUND  
YOUR EARS--

YOU ARE  
MEN ONLY--  
AND MEN  
CAN BE  
SLAIN!

AND YOU  
STILL WANT  
TO PLAY AT  
SWORDS!?

WELL THEN,  
THIS WILL  
TEACH YOU,  
SOON  
ENOUGH--

--THAT  
I'VE  
NO TIME  
FOR  
GAMES!

AARRAH!!

YOU'VE--  
NURT ME!!







...THEN ERUPTING, IN A FIERY CATAKLISM WHICH  
TURNS EARTH AND SKY AND SEA INTO ONE GRIM  
HUE OF BLOODY CRIMSON.

AND TWO MEN  
LOOK BACK UPON  
THIS BURNING  
MONUMENT TO THE  
FOLLY AND  
EPHEMERA OF  
MAN'S GREATEST  
GLORIES...

...AND CAN THINK OF NOTHING TO SAY.

LATER, AS THE DAWN SUN GLEAMS  
ALONG THE SEA-RIM...

SHO, THE  
RAFT!  
CROM'S  
DEVILS--  
A  
SHIP!

TURANIAN,  
BY HER  
LOOK.

IF THEY  
SUSPECT  
I WAS A  
PIRATE  
OF LATE--!

HAULED ABOARD,  
CONAN BRIEFLY  
RECOUNTS THEIR  
STORY... THE  
TALE OF THE  
FALL OF  
BAL-SAGOTH...

QUITE INTERESTING.

BUT, THIS  
VESSEL IS BOUND  
FOR EVEN  
GREATER  
WONDERS.

FOR, I AM  
YEZDIGERD...  
PRINCE OF ALL  
TURAN, THOUGH  
SEPARATED FROM  
MY WAR-FLEET  
BY THE RECENT  
TEMPEST.

WE ARE EASTWARD  
BOUND, TO LAY LOW A  
CITY-STATE WHICH HAS  
OFFENDED BOTH OUR-  
SELVES AND HEAVEN...

...UNLESS, OF COURSE,  
YOU'D RATHER USE  
THEM SWIMMING BACK  
TOWARD THAT  
BEDEVILED ISLE...

WELLLLL

... AND WE HAVE  
NEED OF  
ANOTHER STRONG  
PAIR OF  
SWORD-ARMS...

EPILOGUE: TWO BARBARIANS  
LEAN AGAINST A RAIL, GAZE  
AT A DISTANT PILLAR OF  
SMOKE... AND REMEMBER...

ALL THAT BLOOD-LETTING...  
AND NO LOOT!

WE CAME  
AWAY EMPTY-  
HANDED,  
JUST IN TIME  
TO GET DRAGGED  
OFF TO SOME  
INSANE HOLY  
WAR!

NOT QUITE  
EMPTY-HANDED, BODY OF  
GOTHAN,  
I BROUGHT  
AWAY...

...THIS!  
THE  
EMBLEM OF  
KINGSHIP!

THEN YOU  
ARE A KING,  
CONAN...  
AS THAT  
DREAM OF  
YOURS  
FORETOLD!

YES... A KINGDOM  
OF THE DEAD,  
WHICH IS FADING  
IN THE MORNING  
SKY.

BUT  
MAYBE  
THEREIN  
IT IS LIKE  
ALL OTHER  
EMPIRES  
OF THE  
WORLD, FAFNIR...

JUST  
SMOKE...  
AND  
GHOSTS...  
AND THE  
STUFF OF  
DREAMS....!